In Pursuit of a Vision: Leadership, Assurance, Roles and Responsibilities in Second Century Communities

A Discussion Paper Prepared for
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PREFACE

The Second Century Agenda

Over the last year the Provincial Board for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) has released several discussion papers related to the "Second Century Communities" initiative. That initiative reflects three agendas. First, it is the role and responsibility of the Provincial PDD Board to set direction and define priorities within the parameters of its legislated mandate. Through these papers the Board is communicating its direction and making its priorities transparent. Second, the Provincial Board has the moral responsibility to improve the quality of life for Albertans with developmental disabilities. It is, after all, these Albertans whom the Provincial Board was appointed to serve. Third, the Provincial PDD Board has the obligation to support the policy direction of the ministry of which it is a part, as well as the public policy priorities of the Provincial Government. Communicating the high degree of alignment between the "Second Century Communities" initiative on the one hand, and government direction on the other is an important objective of these papers.

Assurance, Leadership, and Vision

The discussion paper released earlier this year by the Provincial Board focused on the topic of assurance. More specifically, it linked the challenge of assurance within the PDD system to the controllership function. This paper continues discussion around assurance but shifts the focus of that discussion to leadership and vision.

The discussion begins with a review of the vision of "Second Century Communities." This review is more than a reiteration of material already published. Rather, the review sketches a more detailed picture of "Second Century Communities" – a picture textured and coloured by the feedback from readers of the earlier discussion papers. The paper then goes on to examine the leadership challenge associated with delineating roles and responsibilities within a new vision.

INTRODUCTION

Objectives of the Paper

The primary objective of the paper is to catalyze dialogue around the four themes of:

- the changing public policy context,
- understandings about inclusion,
- non approaches to governance and
- controllership

The secondary objective is to catalyze discussion around the roles and responsibilities of the PDD Provincial Board and Community Boards.

Responses to the Vision

Since the Provincial PDD Board released the initial discussion paper on "Second Century Communities," many stakeholders have commented on the paper's strengths and weaknesses. These commentaries reflect the multiple perspectives and roles of PDD's many stakeholders. The narrative that follows attempts to summarize and interpret the many dialogues and commentaries that have been catalyzed by the "Second Century Communities" initiative.

The Historical Context

When the "Second Century Communities" initiative was first launched, considerable discussion was focused on the historical context of services to persons with developmental disabilities. These discussions reflected a perception that there were three major and distinct eras in the history of these services. The first era was defined by the institutional model, by which persons with developmental disabilities were congregated and segregated in remote residential settings. These institutions were generally self-contained, with little need or opportunity for interaction between the institutionalized residents and members of the larger community.

The second era was defined by the "living in the community" model. Under this model, persons with developmental disabilities resided in settings such as group homes located within the geographic boundaries of communities. In contrast to the institutional model, these residential facilities were not self-contained. Rather, under the "living in the community" model, persons with developmental disabilities resided, worked, and recreated in different settings. Individuals

were still separated and congregated in these different settings; however, generally on a smaller scale than was typically the case under the institutional model.

The third era (the era of "Second Century Communities") is envisioned as an era where persons with developmental disabilities are no longer routinely segregated and/or congregated in groups. The daily rhythm of life (e.g. eating, sleeping, working, travelling, socializing, and recreating) is not experienced as prescheduled blocks of time, shared with blocks of other people. The expression of individuality and the joy of spontaneity under this model contrasts vividly with the regimentation of the institutional model and the "living in the community" model. Under the "Second Century Communities" vision, the industrial engineering approach to planning, (both shared by the institutional and "living in the community" models) gives way to person-centred planning.

Another critical distinction between the "living in the community" model and the "Second Century Communities"" vision lies in the role of generic services. Under the "living in the community" model, core services (e.g. residential and vocational) are provided by agencies specialized in serving persons with developmental disabilities. Under the "Second Century Communities" vision, persons with developmental disabilities are served by agencies that specialize in providing particular services (e.g. vocational training), not serving particular types of people.

Other Perspectives on Historical Context

Some commentators on the "Second Century Communities" initiative however have indicated that the potential value of a new vision does not lie in the transformation of service delivery. To these critics the historical shift in service delivery from an institutional model to a community-based model and on to a generic services model reflects continuation of a common theme – a preoccupation with persons with developmental disabilities as clients. These critics argue that under this "client paradigm" quality of life and life choices become defined by the constraints of service systems, not by persons with developmental disabilities.

Those who express this point of view see persons with developmental disabilities, first and foremost, as members of families and communities. To define people primarily as clients of services systems is seen as denigrating to people's rightful membership in families and communities.

Inclusion and Personal Agency

This visionary school of thought also has a different perspective on the traditional distinction between inclusion and exclusion. The common perspective has been that the institutional model represented the acme of exclusion because it segregated and congregated persons with developmental disabilities in remote locations. This common perception viewed the "living in the community" model as inclusive because it ended the isolation of such persons, allowing them to live within the broader geographic community.

The emerging visionary view, however, is that exclusion still occurs within the "living in community" model, because persons with developmental disabilities are defined first by their disabilities and second by their status as clients. This visionary perspective holds that inclusion only exists when individuals lead inclusive lives. Inclusive lives only result when individuals with developmental disabilities enjoy self-determination – when their quality of life and life choices are shaped by themselves and not by the structure of a service system.

To these "new visionaries" the lives of persons with developmental disabilities have always been dominated by agents. Under the institutional model these agents were primarily medical diagnosticians who knew "what was best" for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Under the "living in the community" model these agents are primarily service providers who know what is possible and what is not possible. From the perspective of the "new visionaries", persons with developmental disabilities need to become their own agents – to enjoy personal agency with regard to shaping their own lives. To this school of thought the growing movement of self-advocacy holds the potential to make personal agency a reality for persons with developmental disabilities.

Implications for Leadership and Assurance

It is against this backdrop of differing perspectives that the Provincial PDD Board is challenged to lead development of a shared vision. Texts on management, planning, and organizational effectiveness universally stress the importance of such a shared vision. However, among PDD's many stakeholders, no clear consensus seems to exist on a preferred future, and the directions the Provincial PDD Board should pursue are not entirely clear. Some stakeholders believe that the institutional model remains viable in the public policy context of 2004. Others question how persons with developmental disabilities can justifiably remain institutionalized in an era when their counterparts in community are increasingly engaged in self-advocacy.

Still other stakeholders believe that the "living in the community" model is worthy of attempts at enhancement. For these stakeholders, quality assurance is a laudable goal. For the "new visionaries", however, certifying the high quality of a segregating, congregating service is akin to "putting lipstick on a pig".

Added to this complex backdrop of conflicting perceptions is the Provincial PDD Board's obligation to act in an assurance role – the obligation to provide ongoing confirmation that desired results are being achieved, and that undesired results are being avoided. When so many conflicting concepts of desired results exist within the PDD system, the Provincial Board's assurance role is challenging to say the very least.

Further complicating the challenge of development of a shared vision is the PDD governance structure. Clearly Alberta's PDD boards are established to support community governance. However, what is not at all clear is how the reciprocal roles of the Community Boards and the Provincial Board mesh to implement a shared vision and fulfill the assurance function.

Sharpening the Focus

The "Second Century Communities" initiative was launched by the Provincial PDD Board to catalyze development of a new vision for persons with developmental disabilities. That vision has not yet fully emerged nor is there agreement on what its key features should be. The next section attempts to sharpen the focus of the reader on a new vision by examining the four main themes that lie at the foundation of the "Second Century Communities" initiative.

THE FOUR MAIN THEMES

The Cornerstones

The cornerstones of the "Second Century Communities" vision are provided by four main themes:

- Alberta's changing political context
- A new definition of inclusion
- New approaches to governance
- New expectations of controllership

Appreciation of these four cornerstones is a prerequisite to finalizing the "blueprint" of a new vision for Albertans with developmental disabilities. A brief summary of each theme is therefore provided.

Alberta's Changing Political Context

Alberta's public sector entered the modern world of public administration in the mid 1970's. Two critical events launched this period. The first was the election of the Conservative Government of Peter Lougheed. The second was the "oil price shocks" of 1973-74, which ignited the "oil boom" in Alberta. Over the next three decades, this boom would transform what was once a rural, agricultural hinterland into an urban, cosmopolitan global trading centre.

During the early years of the Lougheed-Getty era, the boom in population growth and economic expansion both enabled and required the growth of "big government." Whenever the need for a public service was identified, a government designed and delivered program was put in place. Those for whom the program was designed were essentially seen as "subjects" whose needs could and should be met by a beneficent government.

This period of "big government" came to an end in 1993 with the accession of Ralph Klein to the Premiership. The "Klein Revolution" launched a wave of privatization (e.g. liquor sales), commercialization (e.g. registries) and harmonization (e.g. labour market programs) of public programs. Determined to eliminate the Provincial deficit and debt, the Klein Government undertook to reduce the role, scope and cost of government. Management approaches and techniques were imported from the private sector in a bid to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Three-year business planning superceded the annual Estimates process as the basis for planning, budgeting and controlling the Province's expenditures.

Public programs, which were not subjected to "alternative service delivery," were restructured and refocused. Income support programs were shifted from a "passive" footing to an "active" one. Recipients of income support programs such as Social Assistance and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped were now expected to pursue vocational training and employment preparation. Wherever possible, continuation of their income support was made contingent upon their pursuit of greater self-reliance.

This redefinition of "passive" programs into "active" programs was paralleled by new definitions of effectiveness. Quality assurance and customer service became the basis for performance management as "subjects" of public programs were transformed into "clients." The business model favoured by the Klein Government thus redefined the economic roles of individual Albertans.

As the end of Alberta's first century draws to a close, it is becoming increasingly evident that the Province's debt will soon be history. A new public policy context is clearly emerging with a whole new set of challenges. That new context and related challenges are captured in the Province's new Twenty Year Strategic Plan. A major part of that strategic plan focuses on a new economic development strategy and related fiscal strategy.

Another significant part of that plan speaks to new roles for individuals, communities, markets, and government. For example, the new plan points out that self-reliance is a major principle underpinning the plan. A reciprocal principle states, "that the potentially vulnerable in society, including seniors, children, and the disabled, have the support they need to live in dignity, achieve personal satisfaction, and independence and contribute to the betterment of the province." Within the Twenty Year Strategic Plan all Albertans, including persons with disabilities, are seen as individuals with personal agency who have social and economic roles to play in Alberta's future.

A New Definition of Inclusion

The second theme providing the foundation for the "Second Century Communities" vision is a new definition of inclusion. As referenced above, the polarity of inclusion/exclusion with regard to persons with developmental disabilities has its roots in the dynamic between the "living in community" model and the institutional model. To those who in the 1970s began advocating for an alternative to the institutional model, "living in the community" symbolized inclusion and institutionalization symbolized exclusion. However, as just noted above, Alberta has changed dramatically since the early days of the community living movement. In the early 1970s, Alberta was not only a predominantly rural, agricultural society – it was also a society predominantly European and Christian in origin. Today, Alberta's communities have members with origins in continents and cultures around the world.

These communities of diversity provide a very different backdrop for the inclusion/exclusion paradigm than did Alberta's homogenous communities of the early 1970s. Difference is today a hallmark of Alberta's neighborhoods and persons with developmental disabilities are simply one of the many types of people who comprise this mosaic of diversity. In such a context, difference is commonplace, not exotic, and paradigms, which divide society into "us" and "them", are untenable. Much remains to be done to achieve full inclusion for all Albertans. However, to be different in Alberta today is to be increasingly perceived as usual and unthreatening.

Another important demographic shift is paralleling this trend to diversity. Alberta's population is aging and families now commonly feature four generations (where two of the four generations are seniors). Living relatively independent lives despite the constraints of aging, chronic disease and disability is the reality for thousands of these senior Albertans. Accordingly, the need for family and community supports is not unique to persons with developmental disabilities. In fact, many of their special needs such as accessible transit are shared by other groups, including seniors.

Against this dynamic demographic backdrop, definitions of inclusion need to be rethought and reframed. What seems to be a good start in developing a new definition of inclusion is to cease categorizing, judging and limiting persons according to their differences. When an individual

Albertan or a group of Albertans are identified solely on their differences, that individual or group is at risk of exclusion. When difference ceases to be the primary basis for identifying individuals and groups, inclusion would seem to be present.

New Approaches to Governance

Alberta's changing context over the last three decades has been complemented by changing approaches to governance. One analyst sees this shift as focusing on three trends; devolution, differentiation, and decentralization. Analysis using this three-part framework follows.

The construction of a modern public sector in the Alberta of the 1970's was soon followed by a push in the 1980's to develop regional delivery systems. Ministries established regional headquarters to both support regional economic development (through the distribution of public sector jobs) and to more effectively consider local circumstances in program development and delivery. However, the "Klein Revolution" of the 1990's went beyond regional delivery to establish regional governance. New regional authorities were established in the portfolios of health, economic development, children's services and persons with developmental disabilities. This new approach represented more than distributed service delivery. The creation of regional authorities laid the foundation for regional governance. Policy development, therefore, became "bottom-up" as well as "top down".

The shift away from the centralized policy development/regional delivery model to a regional governance model necessarily facilitated the expression of differentiation within regional governance structures. Different regions in the Province have different needs and priorities than others and regional approaches to policy development and implementation soon reflected these realties. "One-size-fits-all" was no longer the hallmark of good public administration in Alberta as it had been in the 1970s.

New approaches to governance in the 1990s also reflected new roles for individuals. The "social choice" movement advocated for "public markets" within publicly funded systems such as education. Charter schools and home schooling were one expression of this social choice movement. Edmonton Public Schools "cafeteria" of high school programs ranging from a fine arts emphasis to an aboriginal emphasis is another. Individual choice, of course, had already manifested itself in the PDD world through the introduction of Individualized Funding.

Health care is also reflecting the decentralization of decision-making power to individuals. One analyst has described that policy field as falling into three eras. The first era was the era of *caring* lasting until the development of antibiotics in the mid 20th century. At that time the era of *curing* began and the new wonder drugs became commonplace in treatment. Today, health care has entered an era of *choice* where empowered and informed individuals demand a role in the selection of treatment modalities.

New Expectations of Controllership

As discussed in the previous discussion paper expectations of controllership have also changed in recent years. Today, controllership is focused on overall performance, not financial performance. As well, performance is increasingly defined in a long-term results context. In the Lougheed-Getty era referenced earlier, controllership focused on *inputs*, the financial and human resources required by a public program. In the "Klein Revolution" *outputs*, i.e. the results achieved by a program, became a major focus of controllership. Within the PDD field monitoring the number of agencies receiving a certain designation or certification would represent such an outputs approach to controllership.

As the Twenty Year Strategic Plan points out, however, in both form and content, *outcomes* are becoming the preferred basis for controllership in the public sector. Outcomes are essentially the long-term desired impacts of public policy upon a group of people. "Inclusive lives" for persons with developmental disabilities would be an example of such a desired outcome.

From Themes to Roles

Analysis of the four key themes underpinning the vision of "Second Century Communities" makes clear the following:

- **The social and economic roles of individual Albertans are being transformed.** The formerly "passive" recipients of government programs are being replaced by "active" participants in the social and economic life of Alberta's communities.
- **Albertans are a diverse lot.** The typical Albertan in 2004 cannot be readily stereotyped and their roles in Alberta's society are similarly beyond stereotyping.
- **Albertans in 2004 are expected to be as self-reliant as possible**. Coupled with this expectation is the reality that all Albertans are interdependent with each other. Roles which are rooted in dependency upon government are increasingly limited.
- **Sound performance evaluation in today's public sector measures whether persons who are being served achieve their desired outcomes.** Success in achieving outcomes is essentially dependent upon the capacity of individuals and groups to fulfill different societal roles.

Clearly Albertans of today play different economic and social roles than in the past. Communities, markets, and governments are similarly challenged to play different roles than in the past. Assurance requires that these evolving roles and responsibilities be clarified as they relate to persons with developmental disabilities. That is the leadership challenge of the Provincial PDD board, Community Boards, their partners and other stakeholders.

Leadership, Roles, and Responsibilities

The Centrality of the Individual

What the preceding discussion makes clear is the following:

- The roles of persons with developmental disabilities in Alberta are in transition from dependent roles to inter-dependent roles.
- These changing roles are consistent with changes in other policy fields including seniors, health care, multiculturalism, and human rights.
- These changing roles are congruent with the values, directions, and priorities expressed in the Government of Alberta's new Twenty Year Strategic Plan.
- Envisioning the societal roles of individual Albertans with developmental disabilities therefore needs to be a critical element of the "Second Century Communities" initiative.

Roles of Albertans with Developmental Disabilities

Appropriate, envisioned, societal roles for Albertans with developmental disabilities should logically reflect the following:

- Albertans with developmental disabilities are capable of continuing growth and development. That growth and development may be expressed in physical, intellectual, emotional, and/or spiritual dimensions.
- Albertans with developmental disabilities have the right and responsibility to participate actively in the social and economic life of their communities.
- Albertans with developmental disabilities have the right and responsibility to be self-determining to the greatest degree possible.

Roles of the Provincial PDD Board

A major aspect of the Provincial PDD Board's responsibility lies in the assurance function. Assuring that Albertans with developmental disabilities can fulfill their roles as envisioned above, should be the primary focus of the Board's accountability. The Board's roles in this regard would include:

- The role of Province-wide leadership. This role focuses on developing, defining, and implementing a shared vision for Albertans with developmental disabilities (this has, of course, been the rationale behind the Board's launching of the "Second Century Communities" initiative).

- The role of Province-wide policy development. This role focuses on developing policy that supports achievement of the shared vision and related roles for Albertans with developmental disabilities (this has, of course, been the rationale behind the Board's creation of the Policy Development Committee. The Provincial Board's provincial partners AARC and AACL are represented on this committee).
- The role of Province-wide controllership. This role focuses on developing, implementing and enforcing stewardship, risk management, performance measurement and accountability requirements. The role seeks to redefine PDD's financial relationships to support the achievement of organizational results for costs incurred in the context of envisioned roles for Albertans with developmental disabilities.

Roles of the Community PDD Boards

The Community PDD Boards are critical players in the realization of a new vision for Albertans with developmental disabilities. Their specific roles in this regard would logically include:

- The role of Community-wide leadership. This role focuses on communicating the vision of "Second Century Communities" to each Board's respective communities of place and communities of interest.
- The role of Community-wide community development. This role focuses on enhancing the capacity of communities to support inclusive lives and the related outcomes envisioned for Albertans with developmental disabilities.
- The role of assuring individual growth and development. This role focuses on assuring that individual Albertans with developmental disabilities have the opportunity to pursue their growth and development, participate fully in communities and exercise their personal agency.

Leadership, Assurance, and Organizational Capability

The above-delineated roles of the Provincial PDD Board and the Community Boards raise further questions around the Provincial Board's assurance function. These questions include:

- Does the Provincial PDD Board have the organizational capability necessary to assure that desired outcomes for Albertans with developmental disabilities are being realized?
- Do the Community Boards have the organizational capability required to enhance community capacity?

- Do the Community Boards have the organizational capability required to support individuals with developmental disabilities in support of their growth and development, participation in communities, and expression of their personal agency?

These questions of organizational capability are clearly important ones. They are accordingly the subjects of the next discussion paper.